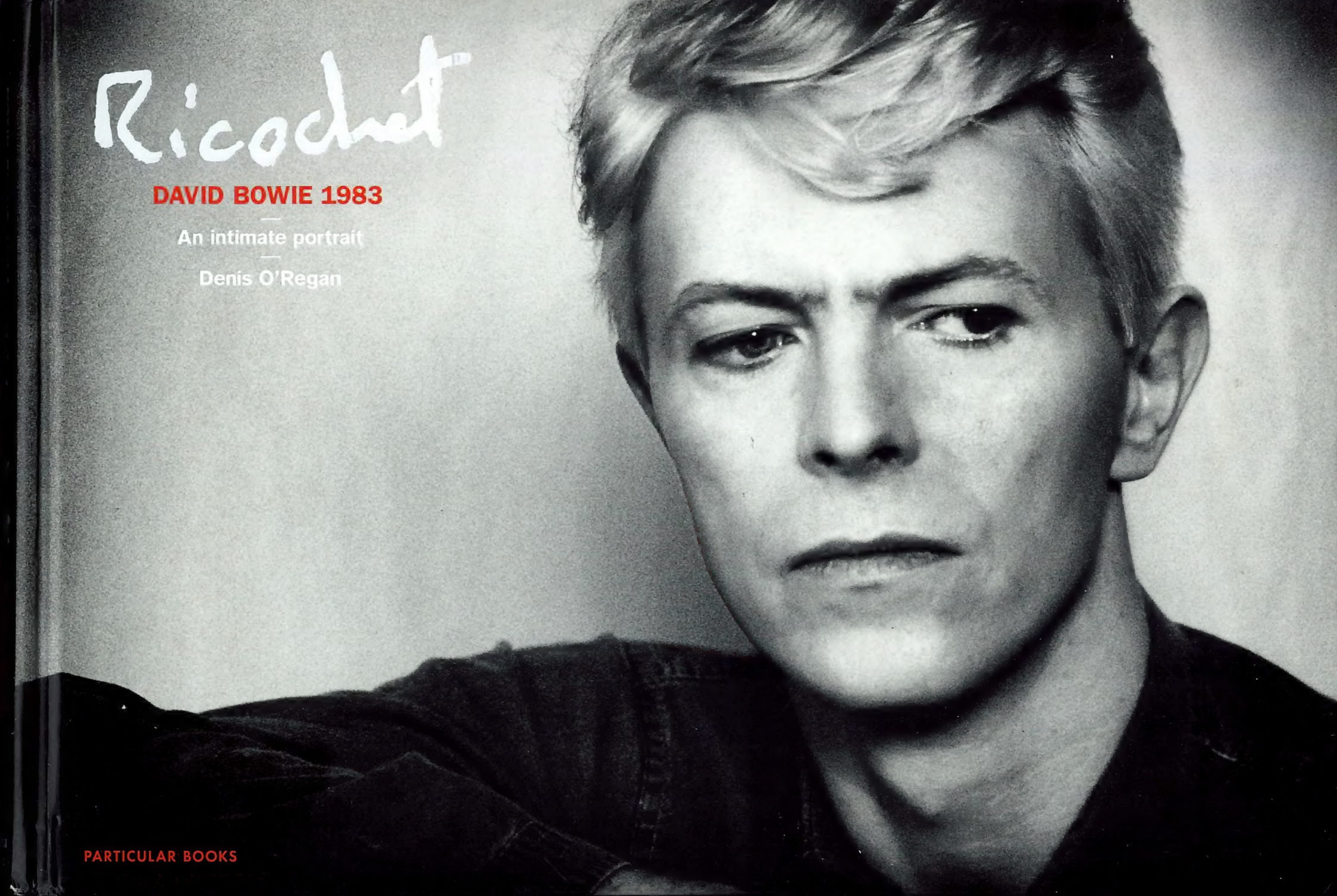
Ricochet

DAVID BOWIE 1983

An intimate portrait

Denis O'Regan



PARTICULAR BOOKS

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It is my pleasure to introduce Ricochet : David Bowie 1983, a unique record of a year in the life of this extraordinary artist, and a powerful posthumous statement. I had been working on this project with David prior to his death in January 2016. On the face of it, it's a record of David's 1983 'Serious Moonlight' world tour, on which I accompanied him as his official photographer. At the time, it was his biggest tour, lasting nine months and taking in fifteen countries, in support of his most successful album, *Let's Dance*. But 'Ricochet', named after a favourite track of David's on the album, has turned out to be more than just a record of that time. It's also a candid, accessible portrait of the most tantalising and elusive figure in David Bowie's life – David himself.

People always ask me what he was really like. Just like me, they were mesmerised by his restless transformations, the way he took on and shed different personae. I believe that in the pages of this book we come as close as we're likely to get to the man behind the costume changes and shapeshifting image. I'd love to claim that it's my insightful and sensitive camerawork that finally lays Bowie bare, but I can't take all the credit. Yes, this is a great collection of David Bowie photographs, but the truth is, I had an exceptional collaborator: none other than the artist himself. When I found myself, a young man in my late twenties following Bowie around the globe, and hardly able to believe my luck, I assumed that what was wanted of me were some striking shots of David on stage, and perhaps a handful of carefully choreographed photo shoots of life behind the scenes. The moment I realised that this was going to be a very different assignment was when David and his entourage were waiting for our luggage at an airport: it was an unlikely spot for such an epiphany. I wasn't taking pictures – the situation wasn't exactly promising, or so I thought, and the location less than stimulating. But then David's PA, Coco – at his suggestion, I have no doubt – asked me why I wasn't shooting, with an unmistakable hint that I really ought to be. And I have to say, David's instincts were absolutely right, as they so often were.

The pictures of him wheeling his trolley through the terminal, and drawing languidly on a cigarette at a baggage carousel (in the days before smoking was banned) are among my favourites. After that, David brought me in closer and closer. But why did he choose to be seen like this, so far from the spectacle and drama of the concert arena? Some of my most memorable times on the road with David were spent alone with him in my hotel room, the pair of us studying my pictures and chatting, debating which ones were 'keepers' and which wouldn't see the light of day. David took a great interest in how he looked and came across, but it's my belief that he thought of the collection of photographs that became *Ricochet*, as an artistic project in its own right, not as a mere souvenir of his tour. Everybody is aware of his profound interest in art – he collected it, studied it, created it, and knew many of the leading artists of his day. And he had absorbed the lesson of Andy Warhol and the other Pop artists that one's own life, be it glamorous or at times apparently prosaic, could be the subject of art. So I duly captured David eating airline food, lounging around backstage, wading through floodwaters in Thailand, listening to his Walkman on the Bullet Train, or sleeping on his private jet. David Bowie had a deserved reputation for being at least one step ahead of his time, and I think he anticipated where Warhol's best-known saying – 'In the future, everybody will be famous for fifteen minutes' – would ultimately lead us: to the Instagram account littered with pictures of meals and bathroom mirrors, to the selfie. With my help, David was chronicling his life in images three decades before it became de rigueur among today's pop wannabes, and indeed their fans.

Like you, perhaps, I am an unashamed Bowie fan. I'll never forget the first time I saw him in the flesh: July 2 1973, at the Hammersmith Odeon in London. I was nineteen. David, appearing that night in the guise of Ziggy Stardust, was twenty-six. He was just a few feet away from me across the orchestra pit, but there was a vast chasm between the teenager standing in the midst of screaming fans, and the star fronting his Spiders From Mars. I was barely out of school, but in many ways the rest of my life was mapped out that evening – I had already seen The Beatles and Led Zeppelin, but nothing prepared me for this fusion of rock music, theatre and mime, and I was utterly inspired. The very next day, Bowie announced that he was killing Ziggy off, and would not perform in the role again. No sooner had I succumbed to the allure of this otherworldly creature than the spell was cruelly broken. In my gloom, I could never have guessed that witnessing Ziggy's swansong would set me on the road to the best job in the world.

Barely a decade later, I would be recording a unique portfolio of my hero, and getting to know him as few have done. In fact, it's entirely thanks to David that I got into this line of work at all. The first time I ever took an offstage picture in anger, so to speak, it was of David Bowie. I was a twenty-year-old working in a corner shop in Barnes, west London in 1974, a year after that Ziggy Stardust concert and only a mile from the Hammersmith Odeon, when

a pair of giggling girls came into the store asking for notebooks. They wanted them for David Bowie's autograph. He was recording at Olympic Studios just along the street. Without a second thought, I shut the till, flipped the sign on the door to 'Closed'; and ran home for my camera – or rather, my uncle's camera. It had never entered my head to be a professional photographer but I sensed that this was a moment I simply couldn't miss. The giggling girls and I laid siege to the studio where Bowie was working on what would become his *Diamond Dogs* album. I caught sight of him as he stepped out of his Lincoln Town Car – ankle-length coat and floppy hat – and asked for his picture. He cracked that familiar snaggle-toothed smile. 'You should work for the *NME*', he said, name-checking the rock fanatic's bible. He was joking, of course, but his remark proved to be prophetic. Within two years, I was documenting the London Punk scene for *NME* and a few years later, having resigned from my day job in the City, I was taking pictures on the road with the Rolling Stones, and that in turn led me back to David and a chance to join him on the 'Serious Moonlight' tour.

Ten years after I had first seen him on stage, I was introduced to David in a huge hangar in Texas, where he and the band were rehearsing. My first test was to accompany him early next morning to a local boxing gym, where he was sparring and getting into shape for the rigours of life on the road. On that first day I arrived really late, but he must have seen something he liked in me because I got the gig anyway. I'm afraid it wouldn't be the last time that I showed up after everyone else, and 'Where's Denis?' became something of a catchphrase on tour. It's a tribute to the brilliance of my artistry – or do I mean the tolerance of my famous employer? – that I made it to the end of the whole amazing journey.

'Serious Moonlight' was an important tour for David. He had been out of the public eye for some time. He hadn't toured after the release of his previous album *Scary Monsters (and Super Creeps)*, which spawned the hit singles 'Ashes To Ashes' and 'Fashion'. The good news for him was that this meant he had a wealth of material from two albums to perform live for the first time to his fans. He also included an eye-catching bit of stage business in the form of a routine based on *Hamlet* that he performed in the guise of one of his alter egos, the 'Cracked Actor'. It was lifted from his 1974 *Diamond Dogs* revue, and hadn't been seen outside the USA before. While we were on the road, David's film *Merry Christmas, Mr Lawrence* was released. He'd filmed it in Rarotonga in the Cook Islands shortly before we set out. So he was appearing in cinemas as well as topping the album and singles charts. Before long, he was selling plenty of concert tickets, too.

There were twenty-five of us in the band and entourage. We were like a family. We lived in each other's pockets, travelling on the same private jet, staying on the same floor of the same hotel, eating dinner together backstage before the show, sightseeing, partying. The 'band party' travelled as a unit. It consisted of David himself, eight musicians, security, administrative staff, wardrobe and make-up, and me. Meanwhile, the 'road crew' went on ahead, to build the stage. Inevitably, cliques formed. We British guys tended to hang out together and that often included David. We were like a bunch of homesick ex-pats: we would grumble about the lack of marmalade at the hotel, or catch up with the English cricket results. Most of us prefer not to be reminded of our karaoke performances, but I will never forget David and I belting out a version of the Madness hit 'Our House', the pair of us overcome by nostalgia for dear old England even though – or perhaps because – we were a long way from our London roots. This was on the floor of the Red Shoes nightclub in Tokyo, and David was by this time a resident of Switzerland.

David always enjoyed a chit-chat and a gossip about friends such as Iggy Pop and their time together in Berlin. He loved to talk and had a fantastic store of anecdotes. He was used to mingling with the kind of people that I would never meet, so although I knew Bob Geldof well, David related to me what Henry Kissinger had told Bob about particular events during the ongoing Soviet–Afghan War, for example. David would discuss art, theatre, film, music, what was happening in the news. With him, there was a lot more to talk about than with most other people. He was an incredibly talented, enthusiastic, intelligent, entertaining, sweet man who wanted to educate himself and others. He strived to make the most of life, ensure that others enjoyed it too, and expand all of our horizons. He made a point of absorbing culture wherever he went. In my career as a rock & roll photographer, I've known headlining stars who wouldn't drag themselves out of a hotel suite to cross Red Square for a glimpse of Lenin's tomb. Not David. He would put on a baseball cap and off he'd go, blending unnoticed into the crowds, disappearing for hours.

David Bowie – aka David Jones, DB, le Grand Fromage, and Dave, to his friends – was a very different man offstage to the one whom the fans saw over the footlights. He was warm, funny, and self-deprecating. I once told him that it was his Ziggy Stardust concert that had inspired me to take up a camera in earnest. 'You'll probably say that to Bono tomorrow', he modestly quipped. I could do a whole book full of nothing but shots of David laughing. That's how he wanted to spend his time, having fun. He loved jokes – mostly silly schoolboy stuff – and he was a very talented mimic. I remember sitting with him in a restaurant in Perth while he was taking off everyone around us, 'doing' their voices and catching their mannerisms perfectly.

He wanted to be one of the guys. On tour, there's never any shortage of free t-shirts – given away by promoters and record labels – and you'd catch David wearing one just like the rest of us. He insisted on travelling in an ordinary town car, and showed no interest in the splendid isolation of a stretch limousine. But he had a sense that people didn't treat him quite like everyone else. They hesitated before sitting next to him at dinner – there was a bit of a barrier. I suppose some felt a bit overawed or intimidated by him, especially the girl sitting next to him in a Tokyo Robatayaki restaurant who sat eating quietly until David said 'hello', causing her to suddenly burst into tears. One night on the road, some of us went out for a few drinks – David wasn't with us. We didn't get back to the hotel until the early hours when we discovered David walking around the hallway by himself at four in the morning. He once told me that people always assumed he would be out on New Year's Eve, so they never asked him to their parties. Yes, due to his fame, David Bowie could find himself without an invitation on New Year's Eve.

Even the best-planned tours take on a life of their own once the show is on the road. 'Serious Moonlight' was originally intended to play at arena-sized venues of 10,000 seats or fewer, as on previous Bowie tours. No one had quite anticipated how big the album *Let's Dance* was going to be, or what that would do to the box office. At one show, there were 250,000 requests for just 44,000 tickets. Soon David's management began booking bigger venues. The American leg of the tour was given a boost before it had even begun, when Steve Wozniak, the co-founder of Apple, got hold of David on the road in Europe and persuaded him to play at a festival he had launched in San Bernardino, California. Until 1982 there hadn't been much in the way of music festivals in the States since the notorious Rolling Stones gig at Altamont in 1969, where a fan was stabbed to death. David and his producers saw the wisdom of accepting the $1.5 million appearance fee that Wozniak was offering him to play the US Festival, as it became. That kind of money would pay for a second stage and enable the road crew to 'leapfrog' through the tour, building a stage in one city while David and his musicians were performing on another one elsewhere. So we cancelled our next show, in France, and following the Frejus concert flew straight to California. The change of plan worked like a charm for David. He played to 300,000 people at the festival, by some margin the biggest crowd of the entire tour. What with that and a *Time* magazine cover feature on Bowie, illustrated with my photographs of huge European crowds across several pages, the advance ticket sales for the American dates were very lively.

Everywhere we went, David wanted me to take pictures of him. In those days, I was shooting on good old-fashioned film. Compared to digital photography, it was limited in many ways. In theory, exterior daylight, interior lighting, and live photography all required different types of colour film, but I would often use the same roll of film for a concert, shots on the tour plane, and perhaps location images the following day. I ended up with some grainy daylight images, but my choice was limited by my having only two camera bodies (both Olympus OM4s), by the availability of film wherever we rocked up, by the size of my camera bag – and not least by my parsimonious reluctance to waste the balance of a perfectly good roll of film. Of course, it didn't help that I would sometimes put my precious film stock in harm's way, like the time I was following David along a marble path as we visited a temple in Bangkok. It had been raining heavily, the city was flooded and I lost my footing on the path and plunged into the river water, much to David's amusement.

Having saved up my exposed rolls of film for ten days or so, I would deliver them to a processing laboratory in a major city. If we were in the States and the tour was moving on before they could be turned around, the developed films were couriered to David's office in New York, and from there back to me again, wherever I happened to be. I'd then spend a day or two editing the images to make a selection to show David. I put the colour slides into a carousel and projected them onto a screen in my hotel room. David would wander in and sit with me, offering his opinion on what should be retained and why. He said yes to about 90 per cent of what I showed him. In the early days, I shot a lot of live images, a lot of stage action, but after a time, David didn't want to see that anymore. He was interested in more unusual live shots, or offstage material, much of it the sort of photographs of himself of a kind that had never been captured before. The focus of our collaboration was moving away from documenting a tour and towards something more compelling, a wholly fresh perspective on a rock star, and on the nature of stardom – or what we now call celebrity – itself.

We made some of my images available to the newspapers. They were very happy to receive exclusive shots, personally approved by David Bowie himself. As for David, he was more concerned with the shots I missed than the ones I took, however unflattering. One night in Japan, the by-now familiar cry went up backstage: 'Where's Denis?'. The tour manager found me and told me that David wanted to see me in his dressing room at once. When I went in, I caught the eye of the make-up girl over David's shoulder and I could tell by her expression that I was in trouble. 'Did you get it?' said David. 'Get what?' said I. 'Get out of my sight!' he quietly demanded. I didn't know what he was talking about, but I discovered that he had been mobbed by a large crowd at the stage door and he was furious that I'd missed it. But the David I knew was a really pleasant, funny man. To make it up to me for bawling me out in Japan, he personally organised a special outing. When we reached Australia, he hired a car that he drove himself, and arranged for a few of us to go for a picnic in a nature reserve outside Perth. We spent the afternoon walking, chatting and sunbathing. It was a very human gesture made in the middle of a major tour by a superstar at the peak of his fame, and I found it very touching.

There was another example of his generosity a short time later. By now, I wasn't the only one on the tour who was taking pictures. Every member of the party had in Japan recently acquired a Canon Sureshot, then the last word in camera minimalism, and was busily snapping away. Every member but one: with the leave-nothing-to-chance professionalism that was the hallmark of my craft, I had somehow mislaid my brand new gizmo. On the eve of the Melbourne concert, David made an impromptu guest appearance on the final broadcast of a live local TV programme, *The Don Lane Show*. Coco and I watched from the wings as he explained his appearance on the fact that 'I was celebrating a friend's birthday nearby, so I thought I'd drop by'. But what was the identity of this fortunate friend? All became clear after the programme went out and I had retired for the night. On the stroke of midnight, I was startled by the doors of my hotel room crashing open, and the entire company bursting in and popping away at me on their cameras. They were led by David, who had my missing Sureshot in his hands – so that's where it had got to! My shocked and frozen expression was captured from a score of different angles as the boss well and truly turned the tables on me. It felt like sweet retribution for all the photographs I had taken of the touring party over the previous months. I recovered my composure sufficiently to take in the fact that a cake in the shape of a camera had also materialised in my room: it was an unforgettable way for me to celebrate my thirtieth birthday. It only occurred to me later that David had dropped by the talk show studios, to the delight of the producers and their viewers, simply to kill time, and to keep himself – and me – awake until midnight, before orchestrating the guerrilla photo operation on my room. But that was the mark of the man. He made sure that the 'Serious Moonlight' caravan stopped off at the Hammersmith Odeon, the place where I had first fallen under his spell, and the smallest venue on our itinerary. He devoted the proceeds of the show to a charity close to his heart, the Brixton Neighbourhood Community Association, which carried out good works in the part of south London where David Jones had grown up.

Everywhere we went, we seemed to be followed by thunderstorms, lightning and all of Mother Nature's other spectacular special effects. We flew from Los Angeles into London through a storm. David decided that he wanted to stay at the Carlton Tower hotel in Chelsea with the rest of the tour party instead of in the suite that had been booked for him at The Savoy. I lived in London and I was planning to go home, but David offered me his suite, so I spent the night in splendid luxury, watching the lightning flash over the Thames. Later, we arrived in Texas as the state was being battered by Hurricane Alicia, which killed twenty-one people and did $1.7 billion of damage. As we were making our descent into Austin, the air traffic controller was unable to resist radioing the tour jet with the immortal line, 'Ground Control to Major Tom'. In Tokyo, we were awoken by the hotel shaking in an earth tremor. Most of us, including David, rushed down the stairs to the lobby, to find that we were the only ones who had taken it seriously. It seems the Japanese guests had simply shrugged, turned over in bed and gone back to sleep.

As a Bowie fan, it was an enormous privilege for me to have a ringside seat for the action every night. I saw an aspect of the man and his band that you might never appreciate from the stalls. David and his sidemen didn't always see eye to eye. In Toronto one night, David brought out Mick Ronson, the guitarist from his Ziggy Stardust band, the man whose incredible playing you hear on 'The Jean Genie', 'Moonage Daydream' and so many other immortal songs. But during his solo spot, Mick seemed to forget what he was doing, and began swinging his guitar wildly in the air. From my vantage point in front of the stage, it looked as though he had been overcome by stage fright, but he later explained that he felt David's axeman Earl Slick had already played too many solos that night, so another would be too much of a good thing.

I always looked out for David performing 'Hang On To Yourself', which includes the line, 'She wants my honey not my money, she's a funky-thigh collector laying on electric dreams', something of a tongue-twister, especially when David took it at a clip, as he tended to do. A few shows into the tour, I took it upon myself to tell David that he was fluffing the words. He accepted my notes with good grace, and promised to do better at the next performance. As the band struck up the opening bars, he winked at me. But at that very moment, a huge inflatable globe bounced from out of the crowd and struck me on the head. David giggled and fluffed the words yet again.

He would close the show with 'Modern Love', a hit from *Let's Dance*, which never failed to produce a surge of adrenaline in the audience. Our transport would be ready backstage with engines revving, primed to leave for the hotel or the airport. Towels and robes were laid out on the seats. Police motorbikes or cars were in place for the escort through crowds and traffic, and the vehicles raced off in convoy as soon as David was in his car and the musicians were on board. They wouldn't wait for anyone, and that became a bit of a problem for me one night in Toronto, when I heard the familiar chords of 'Modern Love' winding up the show from the back of the stadium. It struck me that I somehow had to negotiate a crowd of 60,000 ecstatic and wildly abandoned people to reach the backstage area, and the motorcade. It was very nearly another unforgivable 'Where's Denis?' moment for me, but somehow I scrambled into my ride. I still can't quite explain how I managed it. Even now when I hear that song, I feel the urge to rush somewhere before it's too late.

If I didn't know before we hit the road together that my employer was a seriously well-connected guy, it soon dawned on me as I was hanging out backstage in his thronged but unglamorous green room. Luminaries from the worlds of pop, show business and high society would drop by, and you never quite knew who might put in an appearance from one night to the next. As photographer by appointment to the court of David Bowie, it was my job to get the shots of the boss with his distinguished guests. The snag was that the VIPs very often considered that they were off duty, seeing David socially and in private, and they weren't always receptive to my requests for a picture. Delicately, I brought the issue to David's attention. The way we resolved the problem was that instead of me pestering his visitors for a 'meet & greet', as they're known in the trade, David – with immaculately feigned world-weariness – would ask his backstage callers if they would mind terribly posing for a quick snap. This 'good cop, bad cop' routine worked like a dream, and we were all happy. It seemed as though everyone who was anyone in 1983 passed through the 'Serious Moonlight' green room. David welcomed old friends including Mick Jagger, Jerry Hall, Iggy Pop and Bette Midler, as well as colleagues from his acting career: Geeling Ng, the actress who had played David's love interest in the video for 'China Girl', and Susan Sarandon, his co-star in *The Hunger*. As one famous face followed another backstage, my thoughts returned to those giggling autograph hounds in west London who had joined me in pursuing David back in 1974. How they might have thrilled to collect the signatures of our guests including Cher, Grace Jones, Prince, Michael Jackson, Keith Richards and Patti Hansen, Ronnie Wood, Tina Turner, Raquel Welch, Yoko Ono, John McEnroe, Richard Gere and Gary Oldman. There was artistic royalty in the ethereal form of Andy Warhol himself, and genuine royalty was represented by Princess Michael of Kent and Princess Stephanie of Monaco. In Japan, David was reunited with his friend, Yellow Magic Orchestra member and *Merry Christmas, Mr Lawrence* soundtrack composer Ryuichi Sakamoto.

In Germany, we were joined for a few days by Christiane F: David had made a cameo appearance in the eponymous 1981 dramatised film about her life. David's mum stopped by, and he ensured that he got to see his son Joe (now Duncan, once Zowie) whenever he could. Hollywood star Shelley Duvall, who was best known at the time as Popeye's girlfriend Olive Oil – or more frighteningly, Wendy Torrance in Stanley Kubrick's masterpiece *The Shining* – hung out with us for a few days. It took her no time at all to get into the swing of the backstage banter, and she organised a quiz using a backstage blackboard, inviting people to 'Name ten things bigger than Denis O'Regan's head as a child!'...

Apart from his own family, no one was more welcome in David's inner circle than Sean Lennon, the young son of his great friend, John. David had been very close to the former Beatle, and he was horrified and grief-stricken by his terrible murder. During the Asian leg of the tour, as 'Serious Moonlight' was moving into its final phase, the third anniversary of John's death – December 8 1983 – was approaching. David and Earl Slick decided to perform one of his songs in tribute. They had settled on Lennon's 'Across the Universe', but David changed his mind and went with John's anthemic 'Imagine' instead. They rehearsed it in Bangkok and performed it at what was then the largest concert ever staged in Thailand. The anniversary itself found us in Hong Kong, where David gave a very emotional performance of 'Imagine' at the Hong Kong Coliseum in Hung Hom. John had memorably described David's music

as 'rock & roll with lipstick on', as David told his audience, and he recalled that the last time the pair of them had met was in Hong Kong. That night, David left the stage in tears. The final party of the tour was held at the Hollywood Boulevard Club in Hong Kong. To mark the occasion, David had a cake baked. His valediction to us, picked out in icing sugar, was: 'To all the survivors, my dearest thanks'.

The last show was at Western Springs, an outdoor concert venue in Auckland in New Zealand. 'Serious Moonlight' continued to set records until the very end. At the time, the audience of more than 80,000 was the largest ever to see a show by a single artist in the southern hemisphere and still holds the world record for a per capita attendance for an event. I took a helicopter over the venue to capture the crowd in all its vastness. David had ordered that there were to be no traditional end-of-tour practical jokes during the show. But the stage manager asked him if he had any objection to the road crew stripping me naked and dangling me over the stage. Perfect gent and dear friend that he was, David replied that it would be absolutely fine by him. I knew nothing of the plot until after the show, when it transpired that the prank had been called off at the last minute after a crank caller made a bomb threat to the venue. Happily, it was a false alarm, and the audience was spared the sight of me up close and rather too personal.

From the windows of the tour jet and the after-show vans, we watched the world go by in a blur, and the *Let's Dance* album grow into the monster hit that it became. At the time David was really proud of it. In all, he played ninety-six concerts to packed houses, selling more than 2.6 million tickets. Maybe the record wasn't as mean and dirty and cultish as some of the other things he'd done. But when, some twenty years later, he called it, rather witheringly, his 'Phil Collins period', that was just with the benefit of hindsight. It was the peak of his career and on this tour he was a contented and happy man.

After we finally got home from the road, I published a book with David through Doubleday, for which he wrote the introduction. Over the next twenty years or so, David and I discussed projects from time to time, and we found that we were both excited about putting together a pair of substantial books reflecting on the two world tours that I had shared with him. In order to assemble this book, I trawled through tens of thousands of black and white negatives and colour transparencies from both my archive in London, and David's in New York. Many of them hadn't been viewed in more than thirty years. The choice was difficult, because I wanted to show as many pictures of David as possible, without including too many from any one particular location. Now that this project is done, I feel that it fulfils my dream of sharing these often intimate photographs with collectors and fans. And, with all due humility, I believe that it offers a genuine insight into the extraordinary personality that was David Bowie. I'm proud and honoured that this book was made with David's support, and hope that it honours his memory. I'm sometimes asked to choose my favourite Bowie picture. I'd have to say that the roll or two I shot with him in Bangkok and Singapore are among my most cherished – it was almost worth being dragged out of bed at three in the morning to go exploring! I remember a day off we had together, boating down the Chao Phraya river in Thailand, calling in unannounced on people's homes and wandering into beautiful temples. It seemed to me that David was at his most relaxed.

While we were collaborating on *Ricochet*, David became very unwell. On the night before he died, my young son Rory, who had become curious about David and his music, happened to ask me if he would ever meet David himself. I assured him that he would, imagining that I'd bring my boy along to a session when David and I were hashing out our plans for the project. It wasn't to be.

People think that David became reclusive after he was first troubled by illness, but in my opinion he was enjoying family life and his other interests – things that he'd never had enough time for until then. But did he still enjoy being David Bowie? Of course he did. He loved it! He was very happy with what he'd achieved. He was very happy being David Bowie, but he wanted to be David Jones as well, and he managed to slip on that baseball cap and disappear whenever the mood took him. It seems to me that that's how David finally took his leave of us, when the time came, quietly, with dignity, without a fuss, but the last we saw of him was as David Bowie the artistic genius, foretelling and facing his death in *Blackstar*. With *Ricochet*, he's left us a remarkable, penetrating portrait of himself, and his golden year of 1983, to remember him by. I leave you with David's own words, from the introduction he wrote for our 1984 book.

Denis O'Regan 2018

Whenever the faces of stewardesses blanche grey-white with fear, and the overhead cupboards open and spill their contents, I hold my little metal Buddha tight and press the crucifix to my chest and tell myself it's just another airplane landing. As near-hurricane winds knock about the inevitable DC10 and pea-soup clouds annihilate even a fantasy of visibility, I hold back the urge to scream, and I remember how bad driving in New York can be these days. But then, even before I have formulated these thoughts into pure terror, the clouds are sucked upward and away, and we are two and a half inches above the waters of Singapore.

For me the Eastern leg of the tour is always the carrot. For the rest, however magical the chemistry of the performance, the day-to-day mechanics of getting from city to city are draining and monumentally boring. That's the stick.

During the cab ride to the Ming Court Hotel, I direct a string of unrelenting tourist questions at the driver. Where's the old part of town? Is this the Arab or Chinese or Malay section? Why are they pulling down all the picturesque stuff? He lets me know in no uncertain terms that the new apartment blocks with their bathrooms and air conditioning are far more in favour with families of five or six than are the rat and cockroach-infested unsanitary slums that I take as local colour. I'm crushed. He then goes on to tell me about the recent drug-related hangings. 'Many people hang one day. Fourteen years old up to seventy. Death just for smoking the hashish. We clean up town'.

The driver also lets slip how hard it is for him to keep up with the relentless upward spiralling cost of living. He hasn't ever had a holiday and thinks he may have taken a few days off work about four years ago. 'But everybody work', he says. 'Singapore will be next Hong Kong'. When I move into my suite at the Ming Court Hotel, the little Malay porter indicates the three-tone carpet, the ten-channel TV. He is bursting with pride about the bathrooms but is visually awed by the three hundred square feet of personal freedom. He paces the room from wall to wall. 'So much space', he sighs.

The Singapore authorities are not friendly toward rock & roll. Two of my songs, 'China Girl' and 'Modern Love', were banned from radio play. 'Restricted' as they say. Our wonderful and fearless promoter, Dr. Goh Pohseng, risked his livelihood, bank balance, and even his freedom to get me and my band into his country. When the authorities heard I was going to do an impromptu guest appearance at his youth club two days before our major gig, they busted it, banned the resident band for indecent performance, and threatened Dr. Pohseng with imprisonment if a guest of the club (me) should get up on stage and sing. He also faced incredible local resistance in getting the staging and lights together. When he asked for three yards of cable, local suppliers – knowing it was for rock & roll – would only sell him a 100 yard drum. No-one would lease him timber for the stage, so he ended up buying an architect-designed permanent structure at ten times the cost ... and so it went, over and over.

The lights were flown in from all over Malaysia. Many arrived broken, and those intact not much more powerful than a bedroom lamp. But, good lord, he tried.

I am supposed to say something to the children in the Singapore audience. These children who are doomed to ride the up escalator forever. These American-designed fibreglass light-conducting interested-inscrutable faces. I stand on a beautifully improvised high-tech kitchen-unit stage, and I am shocked at how loose-eyed and shoddy my songs seem in the face of the fact that these green-and-red-streaked kids represent a thousand-year-old culture. As if in agreement with the cultural differences, the local authorities have separated me from the kids with a 65-foot ramp between the first row and stage. I do mean kids and I do mean separated.

I rip through a welcome and an introduction to the band in Chinese. It is received with dutiful sympathy by the crowd as my pronunciation is so dreadful that not one word is understood. The audience end of the ramp is so far away from the band that I am singing half a beat behind them. I look back and see a tiny, jumping Carlos Alomar leading a badly lit rock & roll group. I peer out and see paramilitary cops at the ratio of about one to two within the first row. They finger their billy clubs, their hands on their guns. My jacket style is designer Tokyo – skyscrapers and diamanté searchlights. There is so much lacquer in my hair that a hurricane couldn't move it. My shirt is held into my pants by elastic thongs round my legs. I have two pairs of socks on because of oversized shoes. I am imploring the crowd, 'put on your red shoes' ... there is a scream of recognition – 15,000 strong. A tiger-print-clad girl is slapped back over the security boundary by a ferocious swing of a billy club.

In a city where you can be arrested for chewing gum, a demand to put on red shoes is deemed unhealthy.

The warm night air bathes our bodies, and the scents and smells of the East grow stronger as the evening grows longer. For a moment I feel I am playing to the tiger-infested jungle that existed here until the arrival of concrete a few short decades ago. There is an audible breakdown of reserve as curious uplifting faces recognize this song, then that one. They are singing along. It is an overwhelming experience for me and for any artist, I suppose, to see an audience of a culture ostensibly so far removed from one's own, singing along. It may not sound like a big deal, but for one night it can mean everything.

Now we are all dancing and loving each other and having the greatest of times. We are back for an encore, and the crowds swell up over the ramp. We touch hands and inspire each other on. All at once my songs sound very good, and I get another elusive glimpse of how lucky I am to be doing what I do. I think I may tour again.

So now I pass from my notebook to the camera work of Denis O'Regan to give you his own impression of a rock & roll tour of the world in 1983.

Singapore
David Bowie 1984

DAVID
BOWIE
SERIOUS MOONLIGHT

Photography by Denis O'Regan
All images approved by David Bowie

SVERIGE-

Tokyo recording studio session

ROLLING STONES
European Tour '82
BOWIE
ROXY MUSIC

EXIT

David's dressing room

Scope Convention Hall
Norfolk – Virginia – USA

Flying 'commercial' over Australia

Kempinski hotel
Berlin – West Germany

Castrol
HD 40 HD 40

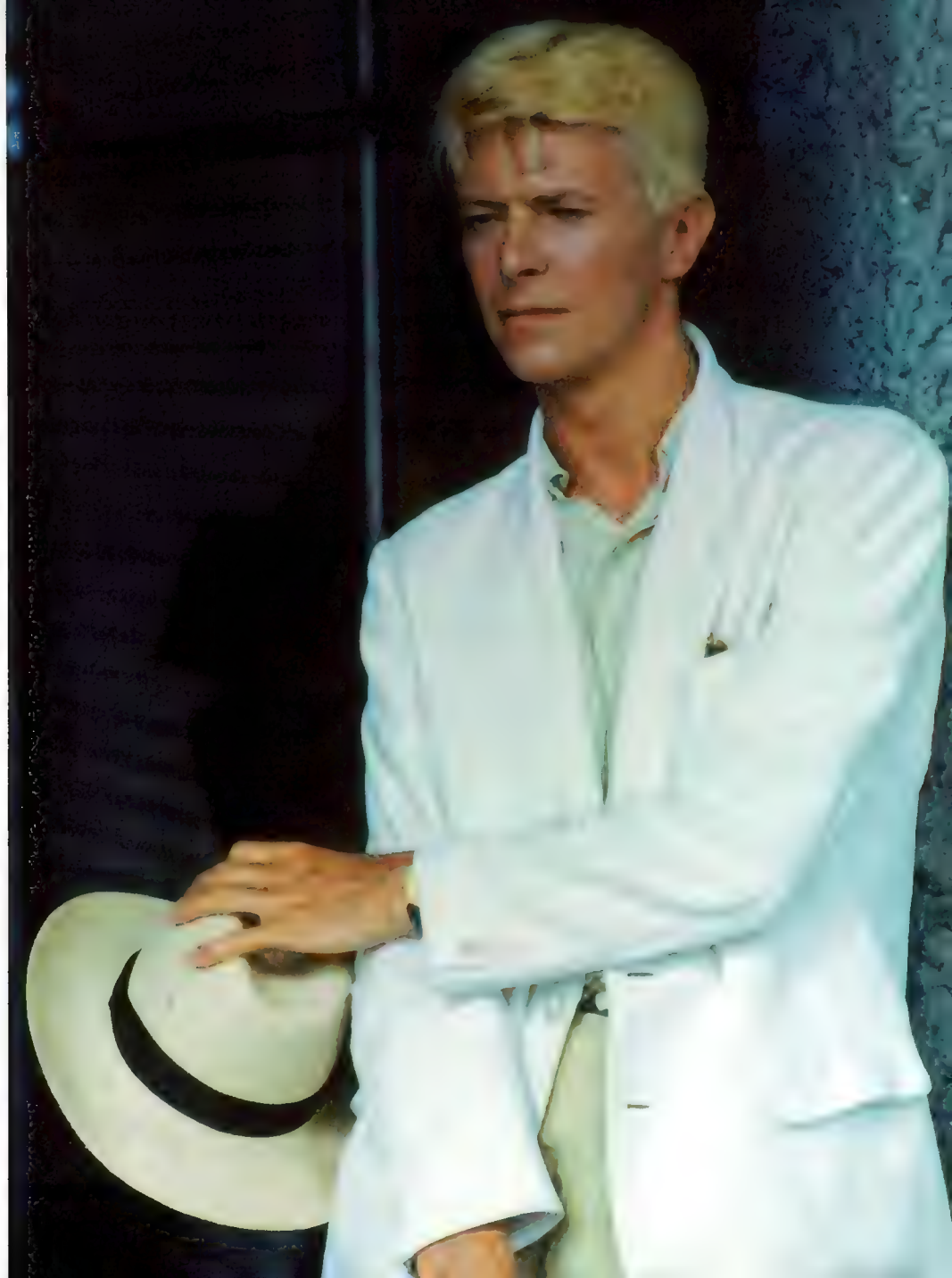
BOWIE
DAVID BOWIE

Mick Jagger & Jerry Hall with Grace Jones

ビール酒
当店は値

Like weeds on a rockface waiting for the scythe
The world is on a corner waiting for jobs
Turn the holy pictures ~~to the~~ so they face the wall

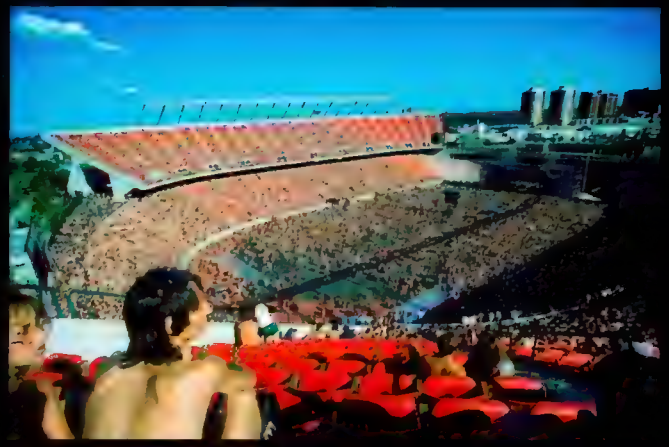
Ricochet - Ricochet
.. ..



Floodwaters
Bangkok Thailand

"Hangar immigration"
Buffalo - New York - USA

Joe Louis Arena – Backstage
Detroit Michigan – USA



Commonwealth Stadium

Supported by The Tubes and Peter Gabriel

In 1983 this was the biggest crowd ever to attend a concert in Alberta

Edmonton – Alberta – Canada

西部警察
PART-III

David relaxing poolside at the Hilton hotel
Melbourne – Victoria – Australia

and who can bear to be forgotten
and who can bear to be forgotten
March of Flowers – March of Dimes
These are the prisons, these are the crimes
Men wait for news while thousands are still asleep
Dreaming of transatlines, factories, pieces of machinery
Mine shafts, things like that

Madame Tussauds
London – UK

Hammersmith Odeon
London - UK

US Festival – Memorial Day weekend
San Bernadino – California – USA

Mick Jagger & Jerry Hall with HRH Princess Michael of Kent
Hammersmith Odeon – Backstage
London – UK

March of flowers - march of Dimes
These are the prisons, these are the crimes
Sound of thunder, sound of gold
Sound of the devil breaking parole

Ricochet - It's not the end of the world

22

Grace Jones and David

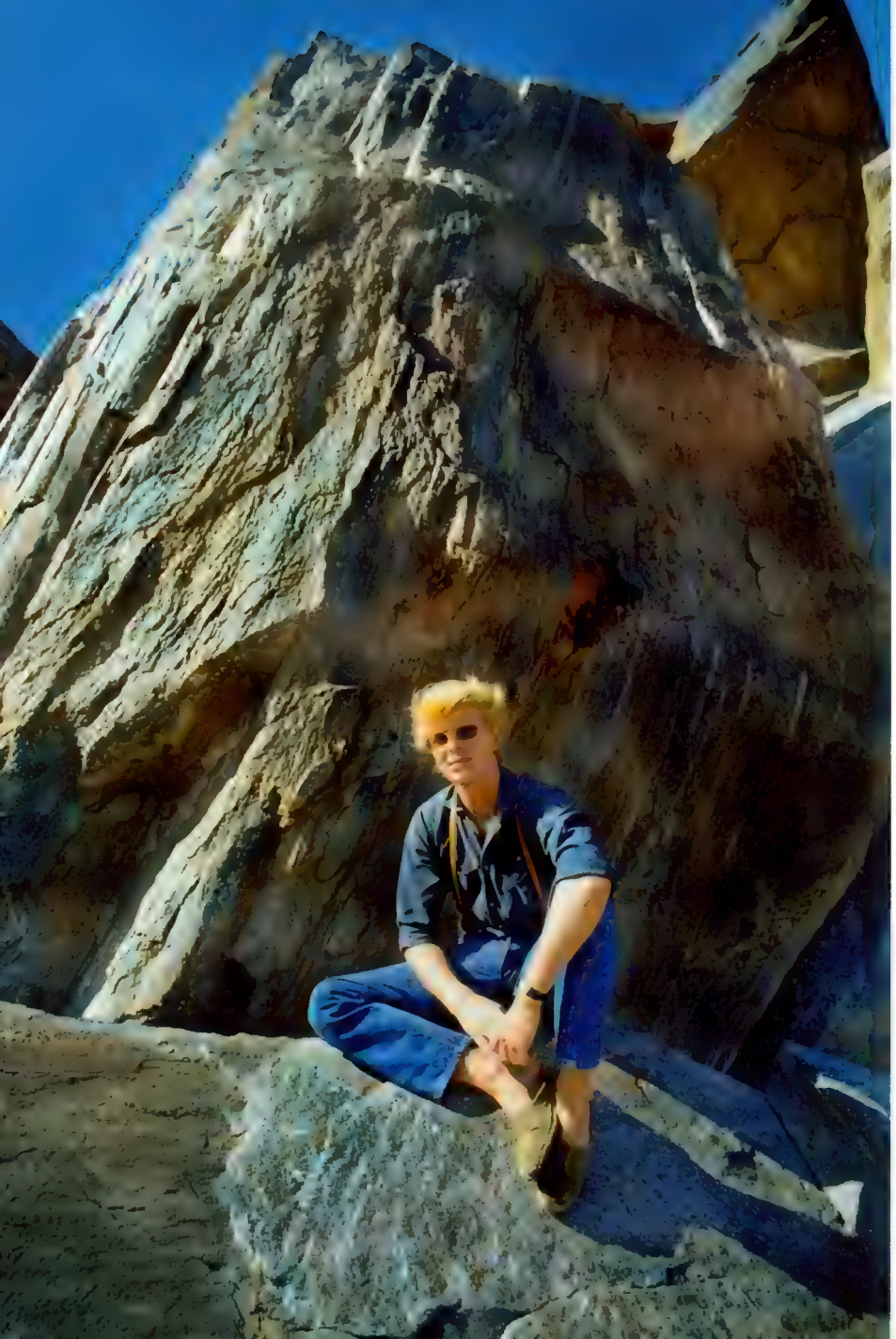
Tina Turner with Ronnie & Jo Wood - Backstage
Madison Square Garden – New York - USA

Princess Stephanie of Monaco
Hippodrome d'Auteuil - Backstage
Paris – France

Waiting for the pilot to jump start Jet 24

...shire Place hotel with Tony Thompson
New York – USA

TOILET
Beware of
Pickpockets
MORE BEAUTIFUL
Interior
粧品



Palm Springs

California – USA

David with Ryuichi Sakamoto and Public Image Limited

BOOTE

Richfield Coliseum – Backstage
Cleveland – Ohio – USA

VFL Park Stadium
Melbourne – Victoria – Australia

The Spectrum
Philadelphia – Pennsylvania – USA

Steveston Marina
British Columbia - Canada

13
fer a vap
stoomstrijkij
fer a vapeur
stoomstrijkijzer
Nova

BOXING
BOXING

Sound of thunder sound of gold — ~~Boodat~~ – ~~Rioodat~~

Sound of the devil breaking parole — Ricochet – Ricochet

These are the prisons, these are the crimes

Trading life in a violent new way — Richchet – Ricochet

And who can bear to be forgotten

And who can bear to be forgotten

March of flowers, march of dimes

These are the prisons these are the crimes

E. PENDER

End of tour party

Harbour View hotel

Hong Kong

Denis O Regan s 30th birthday party

Hilton hotel

Melbourne - Australia

SINGER

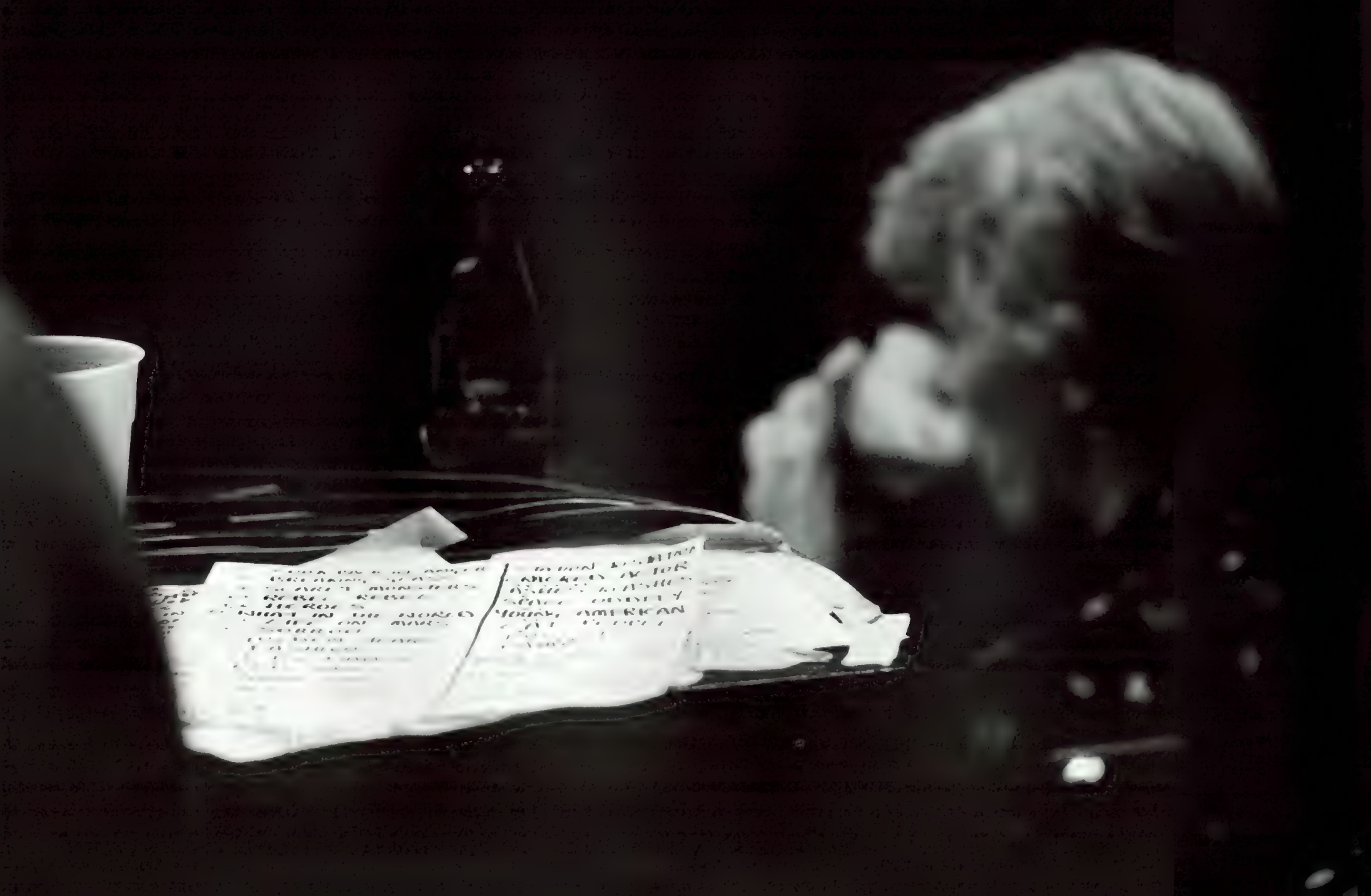
Pre-tour press conference at Claridge's hotel
London

Longtail boat on the Chao-Phraya river
Bangkok – Thailand

USG
7UP

Blanco
Court
華美紙盒
BOX MAKER
華美紙盒
HYLAM ST
336
7

Western Springs
Auckland - New Zealand
To date the largest crowd per capita, anywhere in the world



BOWIE

"I've come on a few years from my Hollywood highs,
the best of the last, the cleanest star they ever had."

Early, before the sun, they straggle off to the gates
In their secret fearful places they see their lives
Unravelling before them
March of flames, march of lions
These are the prisons those are the crimes
Sound of thunder sound of gold
Sound of the devil breaking parole

Picnic with David and friends

John Forrest National Park

Perth – Australia

VFL Park – Backstage
Melbourne – Victoria – Australia

sement Horizon 'Young Americans' Rosemont Horizon
Chicago – USA

BELT 17

Bette Midler – Michael Jackson – Cher – Backstage
Los Angeles Forum
California – USA

and Jackson and friends

David with Michael Jackson and friends

Ricochet It's not the end of the world

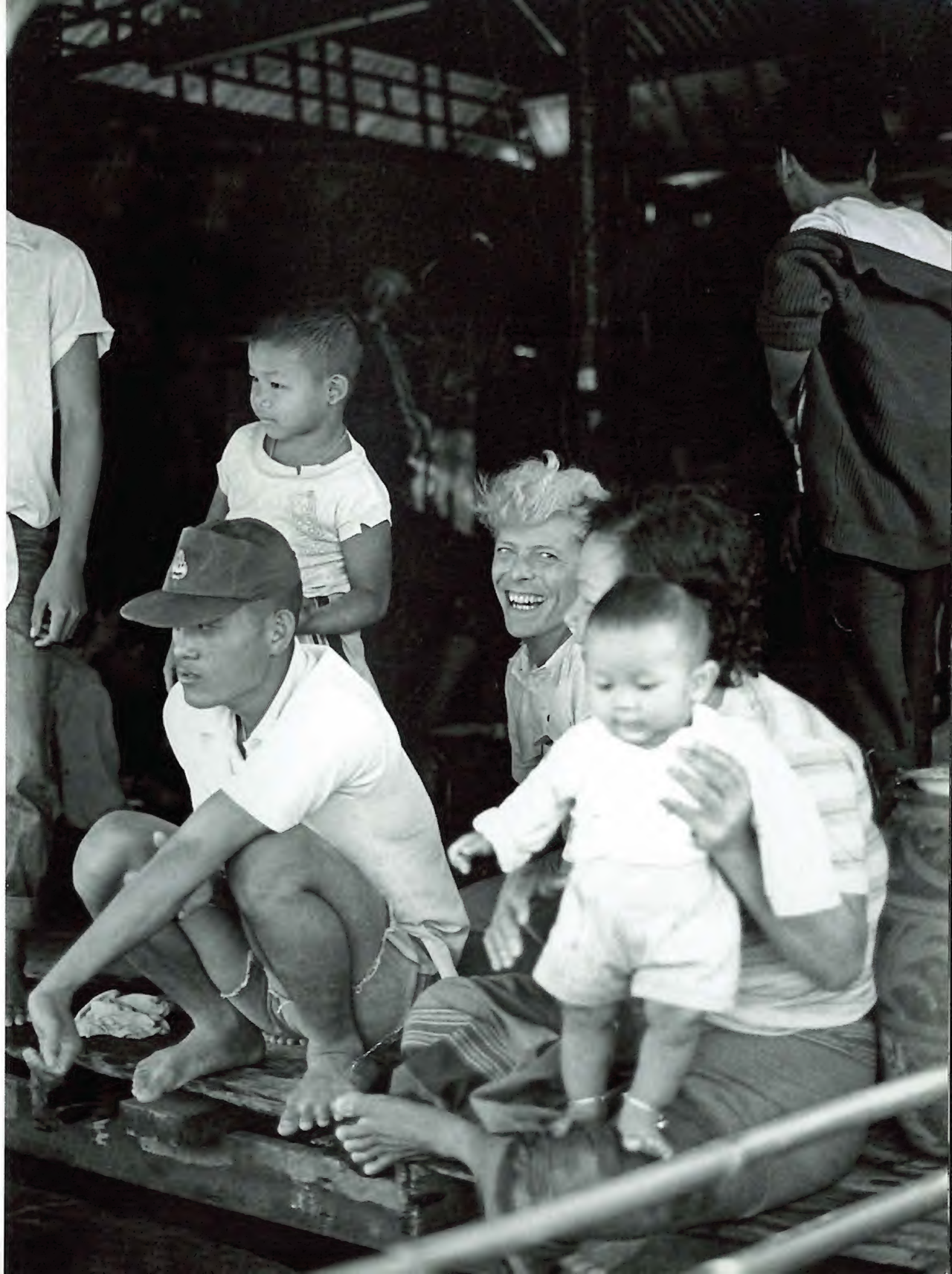
And who can bear to be forgotten
But when they get home, damp eyed and weary
they smile and crush their children to their heaving chests
~~and sing to them~~. Making unfulfillable promises
. For who can bear to be forgotten.

Bangkok – Thailand
Guido Pittaveglia

AN UDO ARTISTS. INC. PRESENTATION 1983
ROCKUPATION '83
DAVID BOWIE
SERIOUS MOONLIGHT TOUR'83
主催/文化放送 ・ ウドー音楽事務所
協力/東芝EMI

Do not charge • Ne pas charger • Nicht aufladen • Non
No cargar • Niet opladen • Nie ładować • Ladda inte •
Şarj etmeyin • Não carregue • 充電しないで
KENT
KENT
KENT
KENT
PLESSEY PLUGS INTO THE WORLD

THE
TIFFIN
ROOM

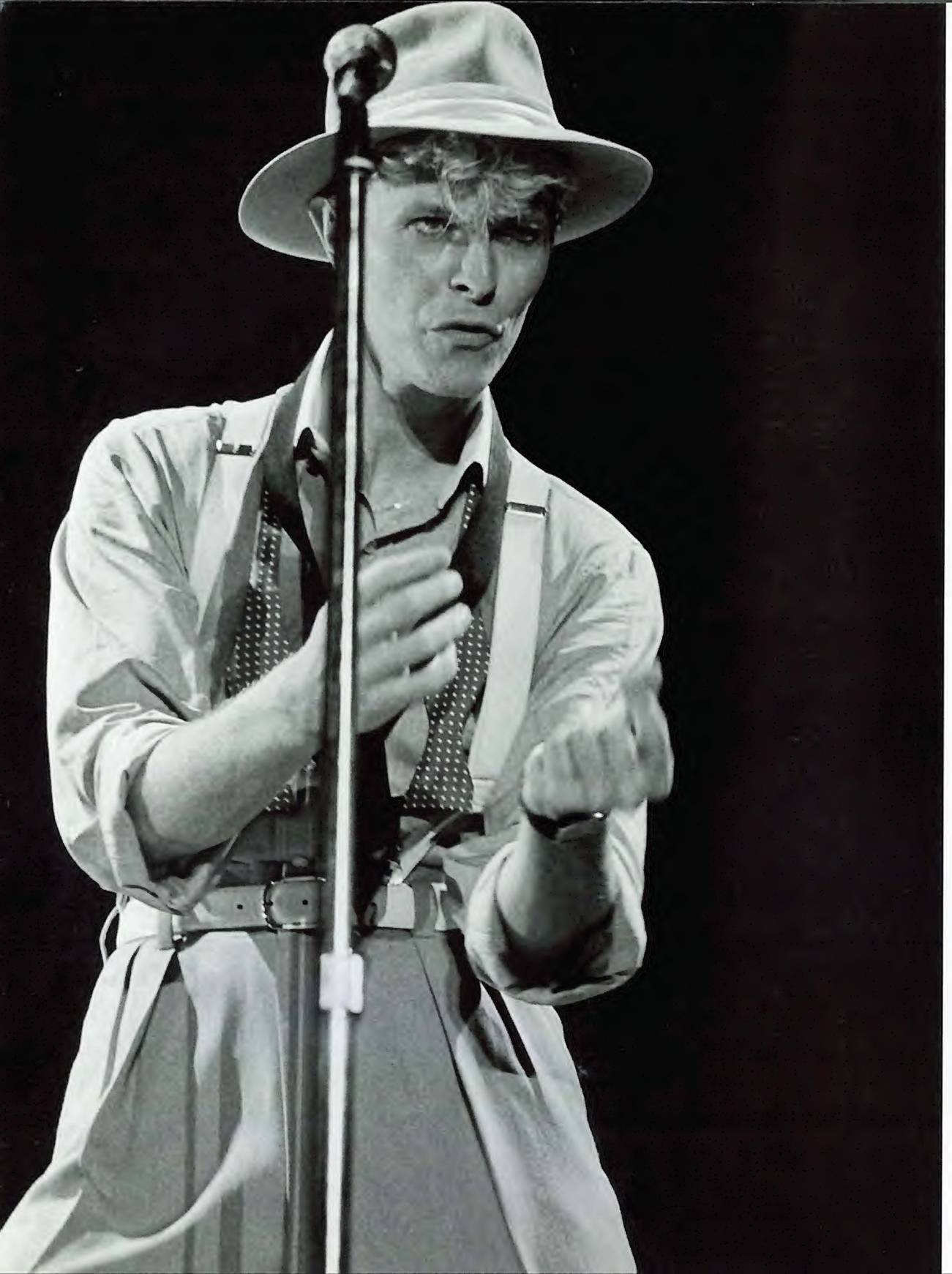


LETS DANCE

(1)

PUT ON YOUR RED SHOES AND DANCE THE BLUES

" " TO THE SONG THEY'RE PLAYIN ON THE RADIO



1075

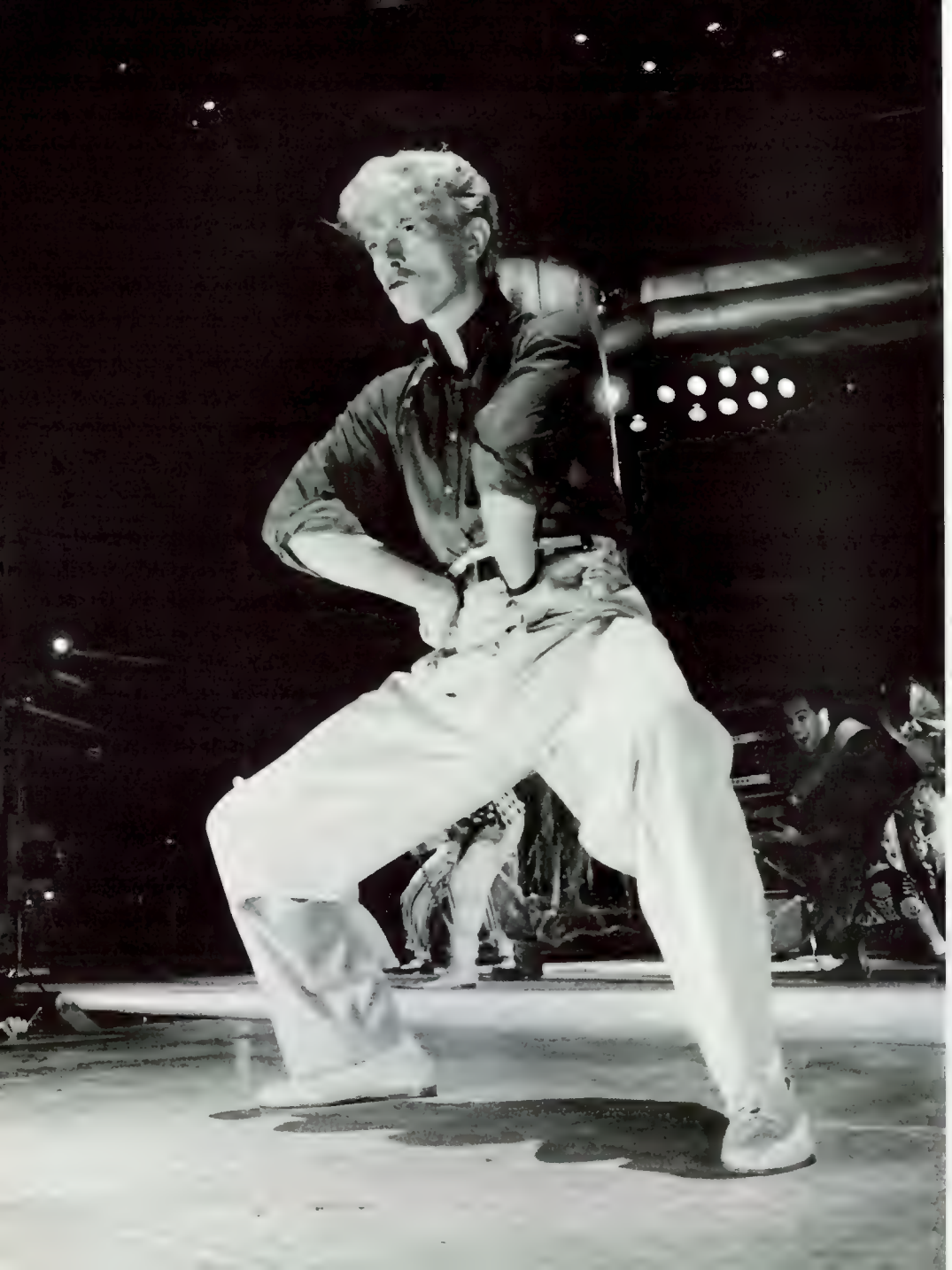
Taking the measure of David for his waxwork at Madame Tussauds

London - UK

"Showing nothing, he swoops like a song.
She cries 'Where have all Papa's heroes gone?'"

Hammersmith Odeon
London – UK

strence of Chinesce of Cngapore Wayang: a performance of Chinese street opera
Singapore



Milton Keynes – UK

Milton Keynes Bowl

Milton Keynes Bowl
Milton Keynes - UK

Folkways
allsortsofmusic
STATIONTOSTATIONDAVID BOWIE
BOWIE
Folkways Music Store
Waterloo - Ontario - Canada

LETS SWAY

(2)

WHILE COLOR LIGHTS UP YOUR FACE

SWAY THROUGH THE CROWD TO AN EMPTY SPACE

James Armstrong Richardson International Airport
Winnipeg – Canada

AMERICAN TRANS AIR
2286

Welcome
TO THE FOOTBALL
CAPITOL OF THE
WORLD
mr BOWIE

HANDLA HOS
EN BRA AFFÄR! HANDLA HOS

Freilichtbuhne
Bad Segeberg – West Germany

nkarne Ltd.
ELECTRICAL
MERCHANTS

Hong Kong Coliseum

Hong Kong

The Spectrum
Philadelphia - USA

Denis' first day with David
Rehearsals at Las Colinas
Irving – Texas – USA

Waiting for the Bullet Train
Nagoya, Japan

✳ IF YOU SAY RUN I'LL RUN WITH YOU
IF YOU SAY HIDE WE'LL HIDE
BECAUSE MY LOVE FOR YOU
WOULD BREAK MY HEART IN TWO
IF YOU SHOULD FALL
INTO MY ARMS
AND TREMBLE LIKE A FLOWER

2145 KJ 13
Carlton hotel
Cannes France

4:00 Door
5:30-7:30 - Meal Time
6:15-6:45 - "Roi Fainéant"
7:15-8:15
9:15-11:00 - David's Show

Las Colinas rehearsals with Stevie Ray Vaughan

Andy Warhol

John McEnroe

Susan Sarandon

DROSTE

Palestinians

ENG IN CHEMICAL & ENGINEERING CO.

SAS CATERING

Kempinski hotel
Berlin – West Germany
Helmut Newton photo shoot

LETS DANCE

" "

(3)

FOR FEAR YOUR GRACE SHOULD FALL

FOR FEAR TONIGHT IS ALL

TASCAM

LETS SWAY

" "

(4)

YOU COULD LOOK INTO MY EYES

UNDER THE MOONLIGHT, THIS SERIOUS MOONLIGHT

*

Milton Keynes Bowl
Milton Keynes – UK

of Sandii & The Sunsetz with David and Ryuichi Sakamoto

LE MATIN
TIERCE-MATIN :
4 PAGES
SPECIALES
WILLIAMSBURG :
LE DOLLAR
AU SOMMET...
NOAH
ET DE
TROIS

Denis and David in Singapore

Ricochet : David Bowie 1983
Denis O'Regan

Photography
Denis O'Regan

Words
David Bowie
Denis O'Regan
Gabrielle Pike
Stephen Smith

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In 1983 David Bowie set out on the Serious Moonlight Tour, his biggest ever. On the road with him was his official photographer, Denis O'Regan.

Few artists and photographers have had such a close touring relationship. This book is the result: a never-before-seen photographic portrait of a year with Bowie, from the theatre of performance to his most unguarded moments. Introduced by O'Regan and with every single image personally approved by Bowie, this is an intimate view of an icon at the height of his fame.

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DAVID BOWIE 1983

An intimate portrait

Ricochet

Denis O'Regan

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